

SAINT LOUIS BIRD CLUB BULLETIN

Official Organ of the Saint Louis Bird Club
for the Promotion of
Bird Enjoyment, Bird Study and Bird Conservation

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Number 9

THE DECEMBER MEETING

will be held WEDNESDAY, DEC. 20, at 8 P. M., in the EUGENE FIELD SCHOOL, 4466 Olive St. PROGRAM will be CONSERVATION, probably conducted by Mr. W. C. Buford, of the State Fish and Game Commission. Club officers, for the coming year will be elected at this meeting; the new constitution decided upon; a Memorial Bulletin for Mr. Widmann arranged; and plans for the Christmas Bird Census made. It will be a very IMPORTANT MEETING----please bring as many people along as possible. Note the location--Eugene Field School.

OTTO WIDMANN

Otto Widmann was born June 15, 1841, in Germany, and came to St. Louis, in 1867. Here he opened a drug store and was active in this business until 1899, when he retired, to devote his entire time to Bird Study.

Mr. Widmann's greatest contribution to Ornithology was "A Preliminary Catalog, Birds of Missouri", published in 1907. It would have appeared sooner had it not been for a fire which destroyed his original manuscript and notes over a period of twenty-five years. In addition to the catalog, he wrote treatises on Rocky Mountain Birds, and a book titled, "The Birds of Shaw's Garden", which was used as school text book.

In 1902, he visited Germany and Switzerland, and made a study of the birds enroute. During his active life he kept up wide correspondence with bird and Nature workers, and filled many notebooks neatly in Script, (we call (continued page 50, column 2)

ECONOMIC STUDIES OF BIRDS

By Louis M. Weber

A large amount of valuable matter has been written on the economic relation of birds to agriculture, their relation to man as game birds, domesticated fowl, producers of guano, ornamental plumage bearers, cage birds, and food.

Their greatest function in nature is the utilization of their vast numbers to aid in the maintenance of the great Balance. Their chief mission is to check the spread of insects. They help to hold within bounds the spread of vegetation and at the same time oversee establishment of plant life in localities where it has been uprooted or is absent. Through their efforts the enormous shoals of fish are limited, and barren pools are stocked. They reduce the number of crop-destroying rodents. They act as food for the support and growth of other animals.

Another most important economic function is their habit of destroying enormous numbers of mosquito larvae which infest the pools where they feed. This fact was learned some years ago and brought into public prominence by Dr. Sam. G. Dixon, commissioner of public health in Penna. He estimated that if the birds were present in their numbers of a hundred years ago, they would prove of vital importance in checking the spread of malaria. Market gunners, however, and the general indifference of the public to a promiscuous slaughter of our game-birds have made this forever impossible.

(Continued in next issue)

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BULLETIN COMMITTEE

N. R. Barger, Chairman
Donald M. Hetler Louis M. Weber

SQUIRREL PAYS RED-HEAD A VISIT IN HIS WINTER QUARTERS

There is a woodpecker cavity, high in an oak outside my window, to which a Red-head has been making frequent trips this Autumn. One morning a squirrel entered and apparently wished to take up his abode. The Red-head was of a different opinion. Whether either wanted the shelter from the storms or whether either wanted food that may have been within, I do not know, but the Red-head showed an equal desire to keep the place for himself. He was much excited and enraged, and the squirrel was very determined, so I was to see it to a finish.

Upon the squirrels approach, the Red-head attacked, but always kept just out of the squirrel's reach. The squirrel entered the cavity and the Red-head started to follow. Quick as a flash the Red-head fled, pursued by the squirrel. Twice they encircled the body of the tree, and twice the squirrel re-entered, but the Red-head always kept just out of reach. The Red-head, doubtless exhausted, no longer strove to even look into the entrance while the rodent was within. Thus the squirrel was the victor.

Today, however, the squirrel must have departed, for the Red-head has resumed his trips to and from the cavity. The Red-heads have been plentiful here at the Campus to date, and so have other woodpeckers as the Flicker. ----

N. R. Barger

(OTTO WIDMANN, from first page) special attention to his remarkable handwriting, even until his death (with records of bird-life, plant life and weather. He was an active observer until a few days prior to his death. He died at the age of 92.

The Wilson Ornithological Club called upon him for his autobiography in 1927, which he submitted in a brief form. His ninetieth birthday was later (1931) announced by the Wilson Bulletin, and by The Auk. Congratulatory greetings came to him on this birthday from many prominent people, including Pres. Hoover.

Mr. Widmann was made fellow in the A. O. U. in 1887, apparently without earlier membership; honorary member, Wilson Ornithological Club, 1897; honorary life-member Webster Groves Nature Study Society, 1931; honorary life member, St. Louis Bird Club, 1931; and honorary member St. Louis Academy of Science.

With the passing of Mr. Widmann, Ornithologists, particularly of the Mississippi Valley, and more specifically those of St. Louis, mourn the loss of a wonderful personality, not soon to be replaced in ornithological circles.--N. R. Barger.

Note--The January number of our bulletin will be a Memorial Issue to Mr. Widmann's career as Ornithologist. This issue will be larger than usual, and most of its space will be devoted to this one article. The article will be composed of experiences, impressions and influences exerted by Mr. Widmann upon his friends, as these experiences are submitted to us for publication by these respective friends. If you knew Mr. Widmann or were aided by him in your bird work we invite you to write something, and send it to the chairman of the bulletin committee at once. Address: N. R. Barger, C - 11 Concordia Seminary, City.

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CURRENT CONSERVATION PROBLEMS

A circular has been handed to us from a committee headed by Mrs. C. N. Edge, that is striving to arouse the National Association of Audubon Societies to much more vigorous work. It is dated Oct. 23rd. We quote from it the following:

"We have in the past year continued our policy of carrying on ourselves, to the best of our ability, some of the active campaigns which the Audubon Association has neglected. Even with our limited resources we have accomplished an amazing amount of work and are rewarded with evidences of substantial progress."

Here they mention that they have secured complete protection for the White Pelican in Yellowstone National Park; that they were first in the field to actively urge the protection of birds of prey; including the Bald Eagle; and in opposing baiting and the use of live decoys; that they early joined pioneer conservationists in campaigning for the protection of the Pronghorn Antelope, the Alaska Brown, and Grizzly Bears, and in opposing the unscientific operations of the U. S. Biological Survey, which destroys valuable birds and mammals alike.

Further we quote, "Our chief object is to see the Audubon Association itself undertake aggressive and extensive conservation campaigns so that it will again lead the conservationists of the U. S. as it did under its first President, Wm. Dutcher. To this end, we continue to publish from time to time evidence of the lack of such work by the Audubon Association. While the Association approves in principle some of the measures demanded today, it does not carry these into effective action. For instance, no steps have been taken

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to abolish the use of steel traps (this question is answered in Mr. Behrens' letter, quoted in this bulletin, p. 53) on the Rainey Wild Life Sanctuary for Wild Birds and Wild Mammals."

Summarily speaking, we gather that Mrs. Edge wishes to see the Audubon Association accomplish much more, that at present, and to that end is directing campaigns against the administrative personnel of the Association, holding that they are responsible for the lack of more extensive conservation today.

THE WILD FOWL SITUATION IN NORTH AMERICA TODAY

(Topic of Address by W. C. Henderson, Associate Chief of the Bureau of Biological Survey, United States Department of Agriculture, at the Annual meeting of the N. A. of Audubon Societies, Oct. 30th).

We quote parts of it: "In the solution of this problem we know that we can rely upon the cooperation of the National Association of Audubon Societies. Your officers have given generous support to the Biological Survey on many occasions when the cause of reasonable conservation principles could be advanced. Although quick to criticize any action of the Survey that seemed to be ill advised, they have always supported the Bureau in its broad conservation programs. Furthermore, on numerous occasions when adequate appropriations were being sought to enable the Survey to establish sanctuaries to conduct necessary research work, and to enforce regulations restricting the kill of wild fowl, Dr. Pearson and other representatives of this Association have appeared before administrative officials and have attended hearings held by Congressional Committees to urge the importance of providing funds for the Bureau's program. In extending their cooperation in this manner your officers have

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neither been unduly influenced by their firendship for members of the Survey nor deterred by the unjust criticism of those who, disappointed because more rapid progress in conservation was not being made, were prone to blame the leaders for failure to accomplish the impossible.

Here follows a review of the accomplishments made during the past thirty years by the Association working with the Survey.

Regarding the personnel of the Association he says, "During the past fifteen years I have been associated with your president in many efforts to further the interests of wild life, and I have been with him at a large number of conferences where plans were being developed to advance the cause of conservation. Dr. Pearson has consistently stood for the conservative utilization of our resources in wild game. While recognizing the value of legitimate hunting as a form of outdoor recreation, he has sought to safeguard the species by surrounding the sport with proper restrictions. He has in recent years, for example, sought the limitation of repeating shot guns, the lowering of bag limits, the prohibition of the use of live decoys, and the regulation of the practice of baiting. He sympathized with the sportsmen in their love of hunting, but insists upon the adoption of such restrictive measures as are necessary to increase and perpetuate the birds".

Mr. Henderson points out diversified interests in water fowl, and that all must be considered. The hunter, the farmer, the naturalist, all should be given a share of the enjoyment as they like it. Water-fowl have decreased and hunters have increased. This combined with the drainage of swamps (their breeding ground) places the duck and shore-bird situation in a serious plight. Many die from the draught each summer, especially the nestlings, which are unable to travel far for water. Many are killed by oil pollution in the waters around cities and docks. Modern

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repeating guns and baiting take heavy tolls.

The plan now is to save enough of our breeding stock of migratory water-fowl to warrant the inauguration of a well-financed progressive program for the perpetuation of these birds. This plan should be welcomed by the sportsmen as well as by those interested only in maintaining our wild life for future generations, for their sons will not otherwise have any game to hunt.

It is hoped that the bag-limit will be considerably reduced this year, more breeding grounds provided and more swamp land permitted to stand un-drained.

MISS ERNST VISITS CRANE LAKE

Crane Lake is beyond Chandlerville, Ill, and thus directly north of St. Louis. No shooting is permitted at this lake though it is permitted around it. The result is this lake is a very good refuge for countless ducks.

On Dec. 2, says Miss Ernst, I found approximately 50,000 Pintail and several hundred thousand Mallard at this lake. It was a light day for, frequently, said the keepers, the lake is literally covered with duck. The lake is a very large one.

The keepers also stated that five Wood Duck, several large flocks of Canada Geese and some Snow Geese had recently been seen there; but as a rule they did not see as great variety of species there as we who are along the Mississippi migration route.

P. S. Of course Herring Gulls were abundant.

DON'T FORGET

to send your remarks about your personal experiences with Mr. Widmann, immediately. The following is an example of the type of material desired: "Mr. Widmann showed me in the following words, how to look upon the weed pest in a sensible manner, 'Why worry about the weeds growing among your flowers, they furnish food for the birds?'", etc.

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THE MUSKRAT MENACE AT THE RAINEY SANCTUARY

To Dr. Behrens' inquiry regarding the use of steel traps, Dr. Pearson writes, Nov. 10th: "This is a matter in which we are deeply concerned, and we welcome your expression of interest in it, and will be glad to have your cooperation in solving it. This subject was brought up at the annual meeting of the Association on October 31. After the situation was explained, of the entire convention only five, I believe, voted their disapproval of the Association's policy in the matter.

When we accepted the 26,000 acres contained in the Rainey Sanctuary, from Mrs. Grace Rainey Rogers, it was with the understanding that we would maintain it as a sanctuary for birds in memory of her brother. Our duties here are, therefore, specifically determined by the character of our trust, and compel us to spare no effort to make this area contained in the gift habitable for birds. These duties are accentuated by the fact that adjoining the property there exist great marshes where ducks are constantly hunted during the open season, and for this reason vast numbers of them seek safety in our sanctuary.

In order that the ducks and geese may find a home on this territory, we are constantly called upon to supply large quantities of food in excess of that supplied by nature. This practice, of course, makes the area an exceptionally favorable one for the countless millions of muskrats and other injurious pests of the birds that swarm in these marshes, and compel us, therefore, to take measures which will keep these animals in check, and enable us to give refuge to the wildfowl that is so greatly in need of it.

Thus far, the only way we have found it possible to handle this troublesome mammal problem is by the use of steel traps. The one employed is designed to kill the animal instantly. We have tried

every form of trap which seemed to give the slightest promise of being suitable for use in this territory, and the one we now employ is the most humane and effective which we have found. We will, of course, continue to make trials of any promising traps that may become available. It is, I am sure, unnecessary for me to state that it is with the utmost reluctance we have consented to the trapping of rats on this Sanctuary, but when we consider that these creatures exist in countless millions, while the wildfowl are struggling to hold their own, we feel that our first duty in conservation is to the birds that are so sadly in need of protection, rather than to the mammals that are prolific beyond control".

HAPPENINGS AT WEBSTER

A few words of commendation, by us to Mr. Jones, will be doubtless seconded by all members of the St. Louis Bird Club. We refer to the fact that he sent an unidentified bird skin, accidentally killed in this city, to the State University to be identified and preserved. Though this particular skin turned out to be a common bird (Northern Yellow-throat), still any bird skin come upon, by any of our members anytime, ought to be identified and preserved in some collection.

Prof. Rudolph Bennett will obtain much data for his statewide collection from the Museum project Sponsored by the Webster Group of Ornithology. Our members are to have the opportunity of placing their observations on permanent record, in this statewide collection of data, through this bulletin (our own). Please note carefully this section of our bulletin. It is conducted by Dr. Hetler. Cooperate with him by making some field notes. Our members ought to get out more.

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FIELD OBSERVATIONS

(Address communications relative to this department to Dr. D. M. Hetler, 424 E. Big Bend Blvd. Webster Groves, Mo.)

On November 11, Miss Ernst and Tom Kirksey made a trip to Horse Shoe Lake. The day was warm with high winds prevailing. Their list is as follows: Herring Gull Blue-winged Teal; Red-headed Duck; Great Blue Heron; Coot; Wilson Snipe; Killdeer; Sharp-shinned Hawk; Sparrow Hawk; Barred Owl; Hairy Woodpecker; Downy Woodpecker; Red-bellied Woodpecker; Flicker; Prairie Horned Lark Starling; Red-winged Blackbird; Bronzed Grackle; European Tree Sparrow; American Goldfinch; Vesper Sparrow; White-throated Sparrow; American Tree Sparrow; Field Sparrow; Junco; Song Sparrow; Lincoln Sparrow; Swamp Sparrow; Fox Sparrow; Cardinal; Cedar Waxwing; Carolina Wren; Tufted Titmouse; Black-capped Chickadee; Robin; Bluebird.

This list of birds is characterized by the number of late transients it contains. Usually the Blue-winged Teal, Great Blue Heron, Wilson Snipe, Vesper Sparrow, and especially the Lincoln Sparrow, have departed for warmer climate by November 11. The date is not only a late one for the Lincoln Sparrow, but the bird is seldom gotten, even in the height of the season, because of its similarity to the Song Sparrow. It should be noted that the Swamp Sparrow is one of the few which regularly winter with us, where there is sufficient food.

Miss Ernst has had the good fortune of meeting several species of hawks during the past month. Sharp-shinned, Broad-winged and Goshawk on the 10th, and Marsh Hawk (gray, hence male) about the 15th. November 10th is an unusually late date for the Broadwinged Hawk. She also reports a Woodcock on the 10th.

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On a trip made to the Deer Creek Area, for a few minutes in the afternoon of Nov. 11, by N. R. Barger and Mr. Hobbs, the following may be noted: Red-tailed Hawk, 1; Sparrow Hawk, 2; Killdeer, 1; Red-headed Woodpecker, 2; Starling, 2; A flock of about twenty Cowbirds all perched quietly in a dead tree. Two new arrivals from the North, were found: Tree Sparrow, 1; and Fox Sparrow, 5.

For Forest Park: The Bobwhite covey is still present in the Park. On Nov. 21 a flock of about 15 Red-winged Blackbirds and a Mockingbird were present. The Carolina Wren is the only singer, noticeable in the park. There is a great scarcity of bird-life in the park this season I think.--N. R. Barger.

For Concordia Seminary Campus: Red-heads are still here, and occasionally a few Flickers and other woodpeckers are seen. Bluebirds apparently find good living in our semi-wooded campus, while a single Sparrow Hawk may be found flying about.--N. R. Barger

NEW MEMBERS

The following new members have recently been added to our club: Geo. B. Happ, 5475 Cabanne Ave. Geo. Foster, Jr., 7734 Gannou Ave. University City, Mo. Robert Jahn, 7749 Delmar, University City, Mo. William E. Ross, Dept. of Bact., Washington U. Medical School.

CHRISTMAS BIRD CENSUS

will be taken as usual by the Club this Christmas. Plans for it will be discussed at the December meeting.

BIRDS Banded

Two Tufted Titmice, one Carolina Wren, one Bluebird, one Cardinal, one Crow and one Junco are birds I have banded this month. All were taken in a drop trap except the Crow. It was taken in a box trap, set for rabbits and baited with an apple. My banding station is operated only on week-ends at Sherman, Mo.--Louis M. Weber.